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ABSTRACT

A community-based course sponsored by Project TRAIN was designed to teach parents techniques and activities to be used at home to reinforce children's reading skills and to increase their interest in reading. Parents who showed an interest in reading, who read to their children, and who played word games with them indicated to their children, by their actions, that reading is a valued activity. This course consisted of four meetings, with topics and activities. The purpose of the first meeting was to explore the learning-to-read process: a simulation activity was used as explanation and demonstration of how children learn to recognize words by sight, using flash cards with pictures and words. The second meeting focused on learning sounds: the parents made picture cards designed for matching initial sounds, learned how to help their children make a collage of pictures with the same ending sounds, and played word games. In the third meeting, the parents learned activities using labels from common household items, for example, circling on a milk carton label all words beginning with the same sound as cat. The last meeting focused on how to build the meanings of new words through a guessing-game procedure and how to construct scavenger hunts. (MB)

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# PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

## Minicourse:

## Helping Your Child in Reading

by

Sue A. Deffenbaugh

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PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

MINICOURSE IN HELPING YOUR CHILD IN READING

Sue A. Deffenbaugh
**Associate Professor**

Foreword

The following article describes a successful parent program, Helping Your Child in Reading, conducted as part of the Hartford Public Schools/University of Hartford Project TRAIN. The article outlines the organizational procedures and the problems (and solutions) encountered in offering this course. The appendix provides step-by-step lesson plans. It was an enjoyable learning experience for the parents **and can be easily replicated.**

# PROJECT TRAIN NEWSLETTER

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## PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

## MINICOURSE IN HELPING YOUR CHILD IN READING


Sue A. Deffenbaugh
Instructor


Research consistently demonstrates that parents play a significant role in shaping their children's attitudes toward reading and learning. Parents who themselves show an interest in reading, who read to their children and who play word games with their children indicate to their children by their actions that reading is a valued activity. Helping Your Child in Reading, a community-based course sponsored by Project TRAIN in the fall of 1976, was designed to teach parents various techniques and activities to be used at home to reinforce the children's reading skills and to increase the children's interest in reading.

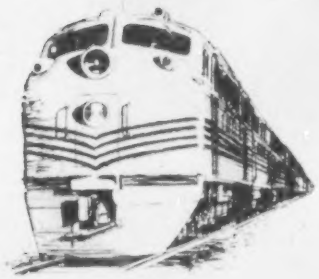
### Course Objectives

The specific goals of the course were 1) to create an awareness of what is involved in the learning-to-read process, 2) to develop skills to assist children in remembering new words and sounds, 3) to encourage parents to read with their children and 4) to encourage communication with the children's teachers.

### Course Organization

The course consisted of four, one-to-one and a half hour meetings held on Monday mornings. The course was offered twice; the first session met in the auditorium of Kinsella School and the second session met at the Martin Luther King Community Center. Both settings afforded an informal, pleasant atmosphere with tables and chairs and a blackboard.

The recruiting of parents for each session was conducted by the Project TRAIN community workers. The names of possible participants for the first session were solicited from the

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Kinsella classroom teachers. Names of students whom teachers felt could use extra help in reading were collected and the community workers then contacted the parents of these children, explained the course purpose, and invited the parents to attend. This procedure was not successful. Few parents came to the meetings and attendance was not consistent from week to week. For the second session recruiting was more extensive. Any parent who was interested in the course was invited to attend. The site was changed from the school to the Martin Luther King Community Center, a small stipend was offered and babysitting service was provided (although rarely used). The class population of the second session ranged from 21 to 14 parents. Fourteen parents consistently attended the meetings; others attended one or two sessions.

The course was taught by a reading professor from the University of Hartford with the assistance of a Project TRAIN intern who acted as a translator. Within the group there were some parents who spoke English exclusively, several who spoke Spanish exclusively and some who spoke both but were generally more comfortable with Spanish. The reading and writing skills of the class participants varied considerably; some were proficient in reading English, some proficient in reading Spanish, some who had few or no reading skills in either language. The typical classroom procedure, therefore, consisted of the University of Hartford professor explaining and demonstrating an idea or activity and the Project TRAIN intern translating into Spanish. Although not as effective as having the instructor teach in the learner's first language, the procedure was adequate and the class members seemed comfortable with the arrangement.

## Course Content

The content of the course was a combination of explanations and demonstrations of how children read, discussions of children's problems, hands-on workshop activities of making flash cards, games, and other projects to be used with children at home. Only common, familiar materials typically found in the home were used in making games and activities. Newspapers, neighborhood flyers, magazines, cereal boxes, milk cartons, labels from household

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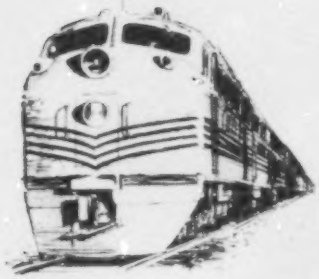
supplies, advertisements received in the mail, scissors, paste and paper were typical materials. Some workbooks (39¢) purchased at Bayre's were used for pictures of trucks, houses and other objects. Parents brought materials from home to use during the class.

## Topics and Activities of Each Meeting

Meeting #1: The purpose of the first meeting was to explore the learning-to-read process. Each parent was given a folder with index cards, paper, pen and a booklet, either in Spanish or English, entitled Helping Your Child in Reading. After general introductory activities, the professor conducted a simulation activity in which each parent pretended to be a first grader learning to read. Words written in McKee's alphabet were used; the parents learned three words: ᒣᐱ+ᗆ (play), ᑌᖇᐱᐱ (ball), ᐱ≑ᑌᐱᗐ7&// (children). Pictures were matched to the "printed" word and games were played until the parents could "read" each word without the picture clue. This was used as the explanation/ demonstration of how children learn to recognize words by sight. Each parent then chose five words to teach his/her child and made flash cards with pictures and words. Possible ways to use the flash cards in games were demonstrated. The parents played matching games and Concentration with the cards they made. The home task was to play the games with their children.

Meeting #2: The second meeting focused on learning sounds. Again the parents were assigned the role of first graders and learned sounds using the McKee alphabet and the sight words learned in the simulation activity the previous week. After the parents understand the process a young child goes through, they then made games and discussed oral word games they might play with their children. For example, the parents made picture cards designed for matching initial sounds, learned how to help their children make a collage of pictures with the same endings sounds, and played word games such as "I see something that starts like baby." The parents' task for the week was to try these activities with their children.

Meeting #3: In the third meeting the parents learned

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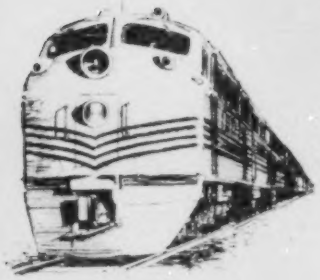
activities that could be done with labels from common household items, such as circling all the for's on the milk carton label or circling all the words beginning with the same sound as cat on the green bean can label or the same number of word parts as apple on the cereal box. Also each parent made a trail game for her child using a particular skill as the basis for the activity. At the end of this session each parent chose a book for her child from a selection of books supplied by the instructor. How to read with children and how to select a book for a child were discussed and demonstrated. The home task for the week was to play the trail game and read the book with the child. (The book could be brought back to the next session and traded for another.)

**Meeting #4:** The last meeting focused on how to build the meaning of new words through a guessing game procedure and how to construct scavenger hunts. The parents also traded books and completed an evaluation sheet for the course. Throughout all the meetings what questions parents should ask teachers about their children's reading skills were discussed. What words, what activities, what books and how to assist were a few of the questions considered.

## Results of the Course

This was not organized as a formal research project and, therefore, there is no statistical evidence to measure the success or effect of this course. Parents' reports of successes with their children provide one informal measure. At each session parents were asked if they tried out the ideas and how they worked. About half of the participants consistently tried the activities. Comments such as "My children really learned the words quickly," "The kids liked to beat Mom," and "They played several times and wanted to do more" were typical. Interestingly, participants' comments also revealed other learnings. Several Spanish-speaking participants reported that they themselves learned new words or sounds. During class activities as games were played to demonstrate how to use them with children it was obvious several participants were learning to read English words and were very pleased with their own accomplishment.

Another benefit of the course was reflected in parents'



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comments about their children's reading/language skills. One mother reported that she never knew her child could do so much or was able to stay at one task for a long period of time. Other parents reported that, after using materials they made during the first meeting, they had chosen words that were too easy.

In general, according to parents' comments and according to final evaluation forms completed by the parents, the course was a valuable learning experience. It was definitely worth the time and effort of the project TRAIN team and should be considered as a possible future offering in the PEP program

## Appendix 1

Following are lesson plans for the PEP course for "Helping Your Child in Reading". They can be adapted and edited to meet the needs of a specific group.

### First Session

Materials Needed: picture cards for demonstrations, word cards with "made-up" alphabet, index cards, pens, paste, old magazines, newspapers, scissors, readiness workbooks (Joyce's variety)

Pattern of Instruction

1) Introduction to Course
   a) Introduce instructor
   b) Explain purpose of workshop and what we will do

2) Getting Acquainted Activity
   a) parents fill in name and address cards and list names and ages of their children
   b) parents are given name tags to wear
   c) if enough parents in the group do not know each other, pair off the people and instruct them to talk to each other and get acquainted. Have parents talk about things like where they live, what they like to do, what they like about child's school, etc. After about 10 minutes, have each couple join another couple and get acquainted with those new people.

3) Focus for the Day:

How we teach reading in school

a) first we make some assumptions. The child's
   1) hearing is adequate
   2) auditory discrimination is adequate
   3) vision is adequate
   4) visual discrimination is adequate

   The child
   1) knows names of the letters
   2) has basic speaking vocabulary of language he is being taught to read in

b) next we teach the child that the little black marks stand for objects, actions in the child's world

Demonstration: Using made-up alphabet teach parents words by matching words to pictures and by talking about shapes of words, letters, etc. Begin by showing

picture, ask name, ask sentence, show word, talk about word, practice; next word; make sentence; use flash cards; play concentration; change first sound; etc.

In teaching children to read in first grade we do similar things:

1) Show picture - talk about words - make sure child understands the word - make sure child can pronounce the word - show the word in print - practice
2) Using word child can now read, we change first sound, make new word, practice
3) PRACTICE until words become automatic is key to successful reading
4) PRACTICE individual words, in sentences, in stories, on cereal boxes, etc.

4) Activity: make a few sample flash cards; parents choose words

## Second Session

Materials Needed: flash cards for demonstration, newspapers, magazines, index cards, paste, scissors, rulers, pens, books for parents, labels from household products

Pattern of Instruction

1) Review
   - -What did we learn last week?
   - -Sheets that begin with picture → meaning, pronounciation, etc. (in first session envelop)
   - -Importance of practice

2) Focus for Today's Session:

Learning New Sounds

1) Demonstrate using flash cards parents made how we can now teach kids that some words start with the same sound: i.e. ball, bat, bell, blouse.
2) Show how we can match flash cards for same beginning, ending and middle sounds.
3) Use labels from household products and show parents how they can have their children look for words that start with the same sound as ball or end with the same sound as bat, etc. Also explain how children can circle sight words like the, is, etc.

Ways of Teaching Children to Recognize Words Instantly

a) parents select words from students' books that child needs to learn or teacher gives parents words students need to practice
b) parents review words; be certain parents know words before beginning to make activities
c) parents make 1. flash cards with pictures, drawings, tracings, etc. and 2. two sets of flash cards with the words on them (nice to have two pictures each)
d) play fish
e) play concentration
f) write out directions for games - Spanish/English

3) Book Swap
a) Have available a selection of paperback books for children, readiness level to sixth grade level. Parents select a book for their children. Next week the parent can swap the book or keep it if the child likes and wants it.
b) Demonstrate how to read a book with a child.

Third Session

Materials Needed: sample bingo and trail games, tag board for games, pens, index cards, construction paper, rulers, scissors, books for parents, labels from household products

Pattern of Instruction

1) Review
-What did we do last week?
-flash cards for matching picture and word
-extra cards for other games - fish, concentration (words from child's list)

2) What did you do with your flash cards?

How did your child respond?

Do you feel your child is learning the words?

3) Focus for Today's Session:

Additional ways to Help Your Child Learn New Words

a) Help parents select new words for their children to learn.
b) Review flash card and concentration game procedures.
c) Make new game: Bingo
   1) make cards (4)
   2) make flash cards ( /2 index cards)
   3) make markers
   4) play game
   5) give parents written rules (English & Spanish)

BINGO RULES

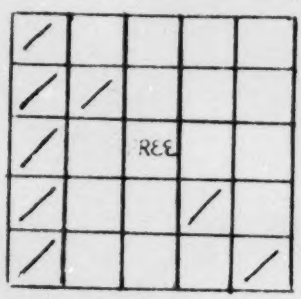
1) Word cards placed in center of table face down.

2) First player turns card over and reads word.

3) Players put marker over word on card. It can be in two places.

4) Next player turns over word card and reads word. Players put markers on words, etc.

5) First player to get all words covered in line or diagonal wins.



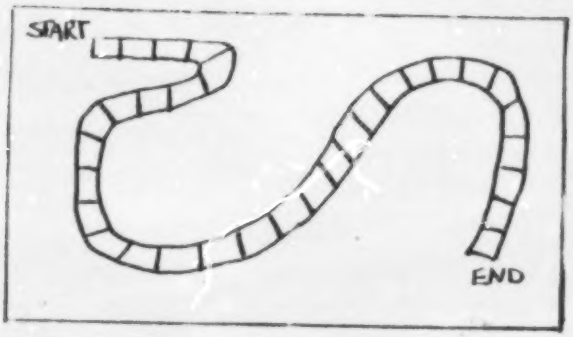

d) Make new game: Trail Game
   1) make board with trail. Use at least 25 spaces in the trail.
   2) make cards with words the child needs to learn
   3) make number cards 1 to 6 for number of spaces to be moved. You can use a dice in place of number cards.
   4) make markers
   5) play game
   6) give parents written rules (English & Spanish)

TRAIL (Book games)

1) First player draws number card and moves the number of spaces on the card.

2) Player chooses a word card and reads the word; if he reads it correctly, he can stay on that space. If he can't read the word, he goes back to his last spot.

3) First player to reach end of trail wins the game.




e) Book swap - parents may select new books.

Fourth Session

Materials Needed: sample scavenger hunt cards, labels, index cards, pens, books for parents, evaluation forms

Pattern of Instruction

1) Review of previous weeks' learning

2) Discuss how children reacted to the games and book swap

3) **Focus for the Day:**

**Learning meanings of new words; following directions**

a) Learning New Words
   1) Discuss how children learn new words on T.V., radio, etc.
   2) Teach a new word to the parents using context clue procedure. For example, teach the word locaquious. Give several sentences and ask parents to guess meaning.
   Examples:
   The locaquious man talked for three hours on the telephone

   Being locaquious is often said to be a trait of women.

   The locaquious bird was finally quiet when his owner put a cover over his cage.

   Establish the following teaching pattern:
   -Say the word.
   -Give sentence.
   -Child guesses.
   -Give another sentence.
   -Child guesses.
   -Give definition.
   -Ask child to use the word in a sentence.
   -Ask child where he might see or use the word.

b) Following Directions
   1) Discuss how to teach children to follow directions through building from one step to three step directions. Explain how to have child follow oral directions on a trip to the grocery store and how to make a scavenger hunt game.

c) Book Swap

4) Evaluate PEP Course
   Sample questions:
   What do you think you learned? What games or activities have you tried with your child? What did you like best about the class? What would you change if you were teaching the class?